GLASTONBURY,
THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN BRITAIN.

Sir,—I beg to send you the following extract relative to the foundation of the first Christian church in England:—

Saint Joseph of Arimathea, so honourably mentioned by the Evangelists for asking and obtaining of *Pilate* the body of our Saviour, and afterwards burying it, was for that noble action closely imprisoned by the Jews, the very night he performed that Christian duty, from which he was delivered by an angel the night of our Saviour's resurrection, which so enraged the Jews, that they not only turned him, with Lazarus, St. Mary Magdalen, and St. Martha, out of Jerusalem, but, putting them into an open vessel without stern or tackling, they turned them to sea, where they were driven to *Marseilles*, in France, whence Joseph came into Britain, where he died.

Old historians say, that he came hither in or about the year of Christ 63, and brought with him twelve companions, whereof one was his son, called also Joseph.

Protestant authors say he was sent by Philip the Apostle, but papists will not allow it, and say he was sent by St. Peter.

There is an old book called *Sanctus Graal*, which says that St. Joseph brought over with him 600 persons, amongst whom, besides his son, were his wife, his nephew, Helaius, from whom it says our renowned King Arthur was descended, and a kinsman whose name was Peter; that St. Joseph was King *Orcanin*, and that divers of this his great retinue were persons of the first rank, but it is said that this book is not to be relied on. (Mr. Broughton.)

It is said by an author of credit, that the first landing of St. Joseph in Britain was in North Wales, where he and his companions, preaching the faith of Christ, were not only denied all necessary relief and sustenance, but their doctrine rejected, and themselves sent to prison by the king or prince of that province, a pagan. At length, he and his companions being freed of their imprisonment, and seeing how fruitless it was like to be to make any longer stay amongst so obstinate a people, came into England. At his first arrival here, he assumed the confidence to go to the British king, *Aviragus*, to whom he gave an account of the design of his journey, which being gravely and modestly delivered by one of so venerable an appearance so wrought upon *Aviragus*, that he not only gave them leave to convert his subjects, but afforded them a place of retreat, commodious for their quiet and devotions, and sufficient sustenance that, without distraction and solicitude, they might attend to the worship of the true God, and give instruction to all those who were willing to take it. The place which the king assigned them was an *island*, rude and uncultivated, called by the Britons *Inis-wyhyn*, that is, *Glassy Island*, surrounded by the bay, full of woods, bushes, and fens, situated in *Somersetshire*. Although the island being cleared of the briers, drained, and cultivated, it was by the inhabitants named *Avallonie*, from the abundance of apples and other fruit growing there; but in after ages, when the Saxons had possessed themselves of those parts, they called it in their own language *Glaston* or *Glascon*. It is said by the same author (Mr. Broughton), that it is a continued tradition of the still inhabitants of *Glastonbury*, that when St. Joseph and his companions came into *England* out of *North Wales*, they divided themselves into divers companies, and that three only at first went to *Inis-wyhyn*, one of whom was St. Joseph himself, and that he and his companions coming tired and weary to a hill, within half a mile south-west of where *Glastonbury* now stands, rested themselves on the ridge thereof, for which reason that hill to this day is called *Weary-all-hill*, and that in the place where they rested, there sprang up a *miraculous thorn tree*, which every year at *Christmas*, in the coldest weather, frost, snow, or whatever else, never failed budding forth its leaves and blossoms. This thorn, it is said, sprung from St. Joseph of Arimathea's *dry walking-staff*, which was stuck by him in the ground at the time when he rested there.

When the rest of these holy men understood where St. Joseph and his two companies had taken up their settlement, they likewise repaired thither, and being all got together, they settled themselves in the adjoining place, where the late Abbey of Glastonbury stood.

A little while after this, they were admonished by St. Gabriel, the Archangel, in a vision, to build a church in honour of the Virgin Mary, upon which they immediately built an *oratory* of barked alder wicker wands, winded and twisted together with a roof of straws, or rather after the nature of the neighbourhood, of hay or rushes. Its length was 60 feet, and its breadth 26.* The annexed woodcut is a representation of the oratory. It had a churchyard belonging to it, which was said to be sufficiently capacious to contain 1,000 graves, but the dimensions of it are not known at this day.

Some authors have it, that these holy men prevailed little by their preaching, and therefore at last gave themselves wholly to a monastical and solitary life; but this is contradicted by others (Dugdale and Dodsworth), who say that St. Joseph and his companions converted a great multitude of *pagans* to the Christian faith. After this manner of living they ended their days in the island of *Inis-wyhyn*, having been supported by the liberality of king *Aviragus*, who, for their subsistence, bestowed upon each of them a hyde of land, twelve hydes in the whole, which was confirmed to them after his death by two of his successors.

It is said that this island, which had been the abode of saints, became after the decease of St. Joseph and his companions a den of wild beasts, till King Lucius' days, St. Joseph and his brethren having left disciples behind them, who continued Christianity in the island or its neighbourhood, and King Lucius spread it through all his kingdom.

Two holy legates, *Phaganus* and *Dameanus*, travelling throughout Britain teaching, preaching, and baptizing, having been informed that St. Joseph and his brethren had about 100 years before, in some measure, spread the seed of Christianity in the *south-western* part of the kingdom, and that they had retired to *Inis-wyhyn*, and there died, and finding out where this sacred place was, about the year of Christ 183, penetrated into this holy island, where they, having found this *oratory*, were filled with joy, and upon searching diligently, they found the *holy cross*, the figure of our redemption, and which, together with several other signs, declared that that place had been formerly the habitation of Christians. After this they found the antiquity of the coming of St. Joseph and his brethren thither, and how three pagan kings ministered necessaries for their maintenance. Afterwards, being admonished by a divine oracle, they added another oratory of stone, and dedicated it to the honour of our Lord and his Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul.*

Hackney. M. A. G.

* William of Malmesbury's Chronicles.

LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITIES.

Lecture V.

ROMAN ARCHITECTURE.

(*Continued from p. 507.*)

Many other theatres were erected in Rome to gratify the inordinate passion of the people for shows. The first buildings used for the purpose were constructed of wood, as were those of Curio, Pompey, and Cæsar. Pliny gives an interesting account of the amphitheatre of Curio, a patrician, who lost his life on the side of Julius Cæsar. To produce a gorgeous pageant on the occasion of his father's death, he "caused two theatres to be built of timber, of great size, so that they might be turned so as to make them approach or join to each other, or be removed to a distance, as he should desire, and all by the means of one pivot apiece, that they hung by, which bore the weight of the whole edifice, the balance being so equal, and the whole firm and safe. The contrivance was arranged thus—that in the forenoon he should exhibit scenical representations, when the two theatres should be placed back to back; and that when the audience was satisfied with that kind of show, the theatres should be turned about until the ends fronted each other (every man in the audience keeping his place and sitting still, according to his rank and order), until by the meeting of the corners of these two theatres, the compass made a fair round *amphitheatre*." After praising the skill and contrivance of the designer, Pliny rebukes in no measured terms the folly of his countrymen who trusted to such a frail and dangerous edifice—"the conquerors of the world, the disposers of empires at their pleasure; and the givers of countries and nations at their will; the vicegerents of the immortal gods under heaven, hanging in the air within a frame, at the mercy of a hook, and rejoicing and ready to clap their hands at their own danger."

This singular edifice was erected in rivalry of one of more costly materials, which had been built by Marcus Scaurus; who, as Pliny says, "when he was ædile, caused a wonderful piece of work to be made, exceeding every thing of the kind that had been seen before. It was a theatre, having three galleries, one above the other, wherein were 360 columns of marble; the base of the stage was all of marble, the middle of glass (an extravagant superfluity never heard of before or since). As for the uppermost, the boards, planks, and floors were gilded, the columns beneath were 38 feet high; and between these pillars there stood brazen statues and images, to the number of three thousand. The theatre itself could accommodate 80,000 persons to sit at their ease."

Pompey's theatre contained 40,000 spectators; it was finished 54 B.C., and was attached to the temple of Venus; Pompey exhibited 400 tigers and 500 lions, besides elephants. This building is said to have been in existence in the beginning of the fifth century, and its site is pointed out in the Campo di Fiore. Julius Cæsar exhibited in his theatre (of wood) besides more lions and tigers than Pompey had done, twenty elephants, and 500 gladiators on foot, and 300 on horseback. In the time of Augustus, large theatres were erected by Cornelius Balbus, by Æmilius Lepidus, and by Statilius Taurus, whose immense mound still remains, and who, according to Strabo, built the first amphitheatre of stone.

* Sammes' Antiquities, pp. 213, 214. Dr. Warner's History of Glastonbury, App. No. I. p. 6.

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